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Strong CIA urged

Liddy says 'illusions' weakened spy agency

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Convicted Watergate burglar G. Gordon Liddy Tuesday night captivated a standing room only crowd at the University of Texas by mixing FBI and Nixon administration anecdotes and attacks on the "illusions" he said have emasculated the U.S. military and intelligence community.

Liddy said that if the Central Intelligence Agency hadn't been weakened by the Carter administration, the assassination Tuesday of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat might have been avoided.

"There was a time when we would have known what happened and who did it. We might have even known about it beforehand and have been able to warn him," Liddy said in advocating a strong covert intelligence corps.

Liddy — one-time FBI agent, Treasury Department official and "plumber" for then-President Nixon's re-election committee — was nicknamed "the sphinx" for refusing to divulge details of the Watergate break-in in 1972. He later was convicted of conspiracy in the break-in and was imprisoned.

His appearance at UT's 1,200-seat Hogg Auditorium, part of a nationwide campus speaking tour, was sold out and his speech was piped next door to an overflow audience in the Academic Center.

Liddy said people in Europe and Asia correctly perceive life to be "mean, brutish and short," but in the United States euphemisms are invented to mask unpleasant subjects in the hopes that "if you can't see them they will go away."

The result, he said, is a woefully inadequate military presence in the world and a general unwillingness by Americans to face problems.



G. Gordon Liddy

"There are no garbage men, there are sanitary engineers. I was in nine different prisons, but not one of them was ever called a prison. Some were called penitentiaries, although I never found anyone in them who was penitent, certainly not I," Liddy said.

Because of these "illusions, illusions and more illusions," that all is right, United States foreign intelligence has been weakened to a point where this country has no idea what the military capability of its enemies is, and worse, what those countries intentions are, the former Nixon aide said.

Without solid intelligence information in a crisis, the United States will "sit there sucking its thumb while the situation deteriorates, taking with it the national interests of the United States in that area," he said. "Option 2 is to go to war."

When he was in the FBI, the safes of foreign embassies were regularly broken into for secret information, he said.